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## PRESS RELEASE

Alaska National Guard

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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By Sgt. Edward Eagerton

### **Alaska Guardsmen recognized as missile defenders of the year**

**JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska**— Eight Alaska National Guardsmen were recognized as being the Alaska Missile Defenders of the Year by the Missile Defense Advocacy Alliance at a ceremony held at the Captain Cook Hotel in Anchorage, May 10.

The ceremony recognized the Guardsmen for their exceptional performance for protecting North America from intercontinental ballistic missile threats.

Two Alaska Air Guardsmen from the 213th Space Warning Squadron, Clear Air Force Station, were recognized for being the best two-person early-warning crew. The two-person crew included Capt. Erik Haugen, flight chief, Operational Support Flight, and Tech. Sgt. Brian Rowbotham, crew chief, Missile Warning Operations Center.

Five Alaska Army Guardsmen from Bravo Battery, 49th Missile Defense Battalion, based at Fort Greely, were recognized for being the best firing crew. The firing crew included Capt. Ryan Richard, senior tactical director; Capt. Jason Brewer, tactical battle analyst; Chief Warrant Officer 3 Jacob Moore, sensor operator; Staff Sgt. Derrick Holmes, engagement control team leader; and Sgt. John Sorrells, engagement control shift leader.

Also awarded was Capt. Eric Kraus, senior tactical director, 49th Missile Defense Battalion, Alaska Army National Guard. Kraus was presented with the inaugural Senator Ted Stevens Memorial Award for being the single best missile defender in Alaska. The award was created in honor of the late Alaska senator for his role in developing the ground-based missile defense system in Alaska.

"The thing about this award is it validates our hard work and the training we've done over the last year," Richard said. "It means the command has complete confidence in our abilities to execute our wartime mission. These Soldiers are complete professionals."

The MDAA, which presented the awards, is a non-partisan, membership-based, non-profit organization located in Alexandria, Va., that advocates for the development and deployment of missile-defense systems, according to Brandon Brunner, the director of operations, MDAA. They also work to educate the public about missile defense issues.

"This is the first time we've presented this award in Alaska," Brunner said. "We choose the target area we're going to focus on, and the chain of command from an organization then

selects who is going to receive the award.”

The crews that were selected for the awards were evaluated for their performance in a series of practical exercises and written exams, and the top performing crews were selected, Richard explained.

“The biggest takeaway is that they worked more as a team than as individuals,” Moore said. “This recognition helps build esprit de corps as a crew, and that they operated as team players, directly resulted in us receiving the award.”

Also in attendance at the event to recognize the Soldiers and Airmen was the wife of late Senator Ted Stevens, Catherine Stevens; Rep. Don Young; Sen. Lisa Murkowski; Lt. Gov. Mead Treadwell; Maj. Gen. Thomas Katkus, adjutant general of the Alaska National Guard; and Brig. Gen. Mike Bridges, assistant adjutant general-Army, Alaska Army National Guard.

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Cutlines:

**Group Photo**

Alaska National Guardsmen pose for a photograph after being presented with the Alaska Missile Defenders of the Year award at a ceremony at the Captain Cook Hotel in Anchorage, Alaska, May 10. (Photo courtesy of Spc. Dakota Volkman, Alaska Army National Guard)